

Lesson on Japan
Himeji vs. Harlech Bulletin Boards
Comparing the similarities and differences of medieval castles.
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Purpose: This lesson is intended to provide students an opportunity to compare a Japanese castle with a Welsh castle. Himeji Castle in Japan and Harlech Castle in Wales are two of the most famous examples of this form of architecture and were chosen for their beauty, genius, and defensive strength. Both castles were chosen by UNESCO as World Heritage sites.

Essential Questions:

1. How are castles similar in both Europe and Japan?
2. What are the unique differences between the construction techniques of English and Japanese castles?
3. What construction and materials used were influenced by the environment of each country?
4. What was the origin, purpose, and style of Japanese and European castles.

Target Grade Level: 9 Class size 20 (can be adapted for larger group). For younger groups the number of tasks can be modified. For older groups each task can be accompanied with a summary paper of their findings.

Rationale: The purpose of this lesson is to develop a better understanding and appreciation of Japanese medieval architecture by comparing and contrasting it with its European counterparts. The lesson incorporates the use of internet sites to build bulletin board of each of the castles. Students will locate, gather, and process information about Japanese and European castles using the Internet.

Materials:

1. Atlases, maps of Japan and England
2. Computers with internet access
3. Student chart to fill in while doing research
4. Construction paper and markers for diagramming the castles.

Activities:

1. Divide the class into two groups. One group will focus on Himeji Castle, the other on Harlech Castle. Further divide each group into a pair (3 for larger groups) of five topic groups on their castle to research on the internet. Each topic group of two will have a task to complete.
2. Topic Group tasks-
Group 1-Geography and environment. For your castle research the geography of the area the castle was built and how the site was chosen and its importance. Create a diagram of the site and surrounding geography

and collect other important facts about your castles location. What was the natural strength of the site chosen?

Group 2-Construction and materials. How did each culture's perspective of nature influence the construction. What particularities of construction and materials were used? Using a poster board create a list of materials and construction techniques used for your particular castle.

Group 3-Military Function-Diagram the highly effective and complicated defensive design of your castle. What were the main obstacles that protected the castle from possible attack? Use a poster board to show the rest of the class the military function of your castle.

Group 4-Domestic buildings-What were the further accommodations and buildings in your castle? Use a poster to diagram the other main buildings inside and outside the castle walls.

Group 5-Photography-Provide a poster with pictures from the internet of your castle. Use pictures of both the inside and outside of the building.

3. Topic group tasks should take two 50 minute class periods using the internet for primary and secondary sources.
4. Each of the large groups will display their castle information on a bulletin board titled either, Himeji Castle or Harlech Castle.

Assessment:

1. Grade each group of 2 on their task completion for the bulletin board display.
2. Each group will do an informal presentation on their castle.
3. Essay-each student will write a five paragraph essay comparing and contrasting English and Japanese castles, and explain why the differences and similarities arose. The students can freely look at the displays while writing their essays.

Castle sites for students:

www.castlewales.com/harlech.html

www.himeji-castle.gr.jp/index/English/

www.castlesontheweb.com/

markun.cs.shinshu-u.ac.jp/japan/castle/index-e.html

www.castles-of-britain.com

www.castles.org

www.jinjapan.org/atlas/architecture/arc11.html

UNESCO'S World Heritage Site